

CHAN PARK SHARING TANGO'S SPIRITUALITY

*Tango is meditation in movement
In India, there is a cultural taboo against public physical contact with woman
What one gets is body and mind harmonization*

Tango and Zen have a characteristic in common, and it is that they are winning supporters worldwide. The recent launching of Korean-American teacher *CHAN PARK's* book "TANGO ZEN: Walking Dance Meditation" in a bilingual edition –Spanish and English– brings an important help to this propagation. The author has a great deal of experience in the topic; for ten years, he has taught this discipline in several countries, and the list is growing. He has settled in our city a short time ago, where he also gives lessons, and he has turned in to us this interview where he summarizes his past and present activity.

How has the bilingual edition of book "Tango Zen: Walking Dance Meditation" been received in Buenos Aires?

As an engineer with an interest in the arts, I worked for NASA, (United States Space Program) for 18 years, my training, as an applied scientist, precludes my answering such a qualitative question, regarding a culture which I am still struggling to understand.

Since relocating to Buenos Aires last year, I have been happily dancing tango five nights a week. I have observed that in the milongas of Buenos Aires, KIER's recently published bilingual edition has been warmly welcomed.

Have you taught TangoZen internationally?

I am Korean American, and I have taught TangoZen in Korea and in the United States at the world famous Omega Institute of New York and at the Kirpalu Center for Yoga and Health in Massachusetts. I have also taught TangoZen at two other meditation and wellness centers, Rancho La Puerta in Mexico and Villa Unspunnen in Switzerland.

Since 1999, I have presented TangoZen workshops in Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, Italia, Spain, Czech Republic, France, Croatia, Canada, Lithuania, Russia, Latvia, Finland, Holland, China, Singapore and India. Yes, India, I remember having concerns that cultural taboos against public physical contact with woman, might inhibit tango dancing in India, but, in 2005, when my partner, *EUGENIA*, and I arrived in New Delhi, we were delighted to discover that the beauty of tango was truly appreciated and that all of our students were quite open to body contact during our classes.



Photo by Robert Tope

Very impressive. What is TangoZen?

In my humble opinion, being in present time, comfortably, without thought, is a common goal of tango and Zen. In the milongas of Buenos Aires, I see people dancing as if there were no tomorrow and not being stuck in the yesterday of their lives. They are in present time, enjoying themselves, their partner, and the atmosphere of the milonga. Minds and bodies are harmonized by tango music, as minds and bodies are harmonized by Zen meditation.

Once the mind is quieted of all thought and becomes in tune with the body, and the music or the meditation, a spiritual state is experienced. This phenomenon has been achieved by men and women since the beginning of time, through chanting or the rhythmic beating of drums. The spiritual aspect of tango, found in the milongas of Buenos Aires, is what I want to share with the rest of the world.

One of my many Porteño friends described it best when he said, "When we were little we breathed the air full of tango." Music is the heart of tango as meditation is the heart of Zen.

Unfortunately, outside of Buenos Aires, people are more occupied with learning the steps of tango, and showing off, than learning the heart of tango. Western materialism dictates that "more is better," and tango dancers worldwide keep learning more and more tango steps as they try in vain to fill the internal emptiness of a materialistic society. I want to change this, to share the heart of tango worldwide, and I am utilizing Zen meditation to teach the heart of tango.

Zen meditation does not have to be practiced in the sitting posture of zazen, (sitting meditation). I teach walking meditation that is and has been practiced among Buddhists, since the Buddha walked his way to enlightenment. I also believe, and other tango dancers agree, that tango is a meditation in motion and if practiced properly, enables tango dancers to experience the Zen moment while dancing. This is TangoZen.

The late *RICARDO VIDORT* said that "Tango is Feelings," I believe he was speaking of the heart of tango, Argentina's special gift to the world. Another Argentine, who helped in the creation of TangoZen is my friend and teacher *RUBÉN TERBALCA*.

My Zen master once said to me, "To study Buddhism is to study ourselves, To study ourselves is to forget ourselves." I say, "To learn tango is to study ourselves, to dance tango is to forget ourselves."

That was quite profound. What is next for you?

My future is beyond words, but I know three things with great certainty, I will continue teaching TangoZen worldwide, I will establish a TangoZen instructors' program here in Buenos Aires, and I will be at the milongas five nights a week, whenever I am home in Buenos Aires.

Do you have a web site?

Yes, you can purchase my book TangoZen and find up to date information about local TangoZen classes, the teacher's training program, and my international teaching schedule at www.TangoZen.com. My e-mail is TangoZen@hotmail.com

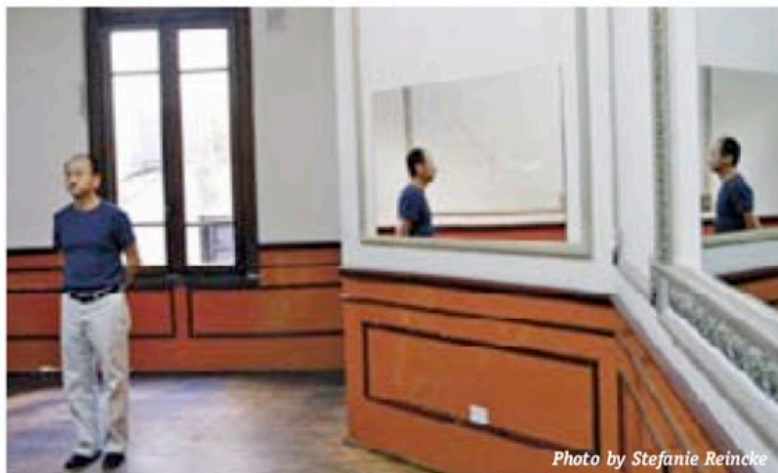


Photo by Stefanie Reincke

